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RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0033

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STATE FOR WHA/CCA, EUR/ERA AND EUR/AGS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EUN](#) [CU](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: AUSTRIA ON EU CUBA POLICY -- DISCUSSIONS
"BEGINNING"

REF: A. STATE 52623

[1](#)B. PRAGUE 531

Classified By: Economic-Political Counselor Gregory E. Phillips. Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) During a May 14 meeting, EconPolCouns discussed the state of EU discussions of its policy toward Cuba with Austrian MFA Americas Director Rudolf Lennkh and Latin America chief Andreas Melan. With ref (b) in mind, we reviewed ref (a) points, stressing that this is not the time to soften the EU Common Position or to end the "June measures" that imposed sanctions in 2003. We then asked the status of the EU's discussions on Cuba policy in general, and on the June measures in particular.

[1](#)2. (C) Lennkh and Melan seemed rather non-plussed, commenting that discussions are "just beginning" in preparation for the annual review of the Common Position at the June EU foreign ministers' meeting. Lennkh said the situation now is "different" than it was last June, when the Austrian EU Presidency managed the issue. Melan elaborated that the effective transfer of power from Fidel Castro to his brother, Raul, was a new factor, even if it meant no change in the regime or in the oppressive system in place in Cuba. There are "new ideas" each year on how the EU should approach the issue of Cuba, and this would be even more true this year. On the specific question of the June measures, Melan said he expected that the consensus would be to keep sanctions suspended, as they have been for the past two years. A proposal was afloat to trade the formal abandonment of the sanctions in exchange for "something" from the Cubans (meaning something on human rights). Melan stressed, however, that the "hard core discussion hasn't taken place yet" on Cuba within the EU.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: This is not meant to gainsay ref (b) analysis. Indeed, the Austrians are not nearly so focussed on Cuba as are the Czechs, and especially Czech FM Schwarzenberg. However, if the Austrians have been unaware of the shape of EU discussions on Cuba (and we have no reason to doubt the honesty of our interlocutors on this point), then there may still be some scope for influencing the discussions.

McCaw